

ELMHURST HISTORY HIGHLIGHT: A. Neely Hall (1883-1959)

Albert Neely Hall was born in Chicago in 1883, graduated from Lewis Institute in 1901 and Chicago School of Architecture in 1902. He and his wife, Bertha Cassidy Hall, moved to their home at 177 E. St. Charles Road in Elmhurst in 1916.

Hall was an accomplished craftsman. He wrote a syndicated column that ran in newspapers across the country and also contributed to magazines. In the December 1911 issue of *Delineator* he wrote an article titled "Christmas Gifts You Can Make in Your Workshop," suggesting a key-board, a necktie-rack, a spool rack, and a sleeve board. As Hall wrote, "useful, home-made Christmas gifts, bound to last for a year at least, and the cost of all combined will not exceed a dollar at the most."

Hall also authored sixteen books including *The Boy Craftsman*, *Home Handicraft for Girls*, and *Homemade Games and Games Equipment*.



A. Neely Hall in his workshop, 1927. M2014.1.622

He had a workshop in his house where he developed plans, pictures and drawings of handicraft projects described in his writings. It is not surprising that Hall's skill in handicrafts and his interest in young people led him into Boy Scouting in 1918 when he acted as a scoutmaster as well as a deputy commissioner responsible for organizing and maintaining troops in Elmhurst. In the mid-1920s the Boy Scouts encouraged residents to "Beautify Your Home" by purchasing window boxes made by Elmhurst Boy Scouts. The proceeds helped pay for the scouts' camping trips. However, not all projects undertaken by Hall and his scouts involved handicrafts. In 1923, the Boy Scouts had a "Scout's Picture Show" at Hawthorne School featuring a romance, a comedy, and scouting activities on film. When Hall retired from scouting in 1927, due to his busy writing schedule, he was made an honorary life member of the Boy Scouts of America.

Eventually Hall's writings expanded into a business. He and his brother, illustrator Norman P. Hall, founded Craft Patterns, designing and producing patterns in their home studio. The company grew until they built a store on the northeast corner of North Avenue and Route 83 in 1948. Although A. Neely Hall died in 1959, the business, run by other family members, continued in Elmhurst until 1986.

*By Nancy Wilson, Elmhurst History Museum Staff
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